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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [MNUC](#) [JA](#) [KN](#) [KS](#)  
SUBJECT: ROK-JAPAN MAR 7 STRATEGIC DIALOGUE IN TOKYO: LONG  
MEETINGS WITH NO PROGRESS

Classified By: POL M/C JOSEPH Y. YUN. REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

SUMMARY

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11. (C) In March 13-14 meetings with poloff, MOFAT and Japanese Embassy contacts said South Korean VFM Yu Myung-hwan's exhaustive meetings with Japanese VFM Yachi during the March 7 ROK-Japan strategic dialogue in Tokyo failed to result in progress on a number of bilateral and regional issues. Yachi called on the ROK to pay greater heed to the human rights situation in the DPRK and to exercise caution in its economic cooperation with North Korea. He expressed concern that Beijing and Seoul had increasingly politicized history issues despite Japan's peaceful post-war history, regretting that Japan had not received a fair assessment of its peaceful intentions 60 years since World War II. Yu responded that inter-Korean engagement was a critical component to resolving the nuclear issue and that the ROK's economic assistance was a humanitarian gesture aimed at addressing famine in North Korea. Japan needed to re-examine its understanding of history more seriously if it were committed to improving bilateral relations with the ROK. Continued visits to the Yasukuni shrine by PM Koizumi's successor could seriously hinder progress in bilateral relations, Yu cautioned.

12. (C) Both sides agreed to cooperate on expanding bilateral cultural exchanges, working toward early resumption of the Six Party Talks, addressing the situation in Iraq and Iran, and examining the future of the East Asia Summit. They also agreed to work toward a foreign ministers meeting at the May Asia Cooperative Dialogue in Qatar. On FM Ban Ki-moon's candidacy as UN Secretary General, Yachi directly linked Japan's support to the ROK's support for Japan's desire for a seat at the UN Security Council, calling for further bilateral consultation on the issue. In a separate March 15 meeting with the Ambassador, Yu said Yachi believed Japanese PM Koizumi would make one more visit to the Yasukuni shrine before stepping down in September. Yu opined that Japan would not oppose FM Ban's UNSYG candidacy for fear of damaging bilateral relations, although his Japanese interlocutors were non-committal. END SUMMARY.

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GRUELING ONE-DAY SCHEDULE, LENGTHY ENGAGEMENT...

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13. (U) On March 13, Deputy Director Kim Yong-kil of Northeast Asia Division I, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT), gave poloff a read-out of VFM Yu Myung-hwan's March 6-8 visit to Tokyo. Japanese Embassy political officer Shugo Tanaka discussed the meeting separately with poloff on March 15. According to Kim, VFM Yu arrived the evening of March 6 and had meetings "from sunrise to sunset" on March 7. In the morning, he met briefly with Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP),

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Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Abe, and former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori. After a brief courtesy call on Foreign Minister Taro Aso, he and Japanese VFM Shotaro Yachi held seven hours of ROK-Japan strategic dialogue (the second since October 2005).

...BUT NO SUBSTANTIVE PROGRESS ON STICKY ISSUES  
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14. (C) Kim stated the two sides discussed the DPRK nuclear program, inter-Korea relations, North Korea human rights, and history issues, but were unable to narrow differences on long-standing bilateral issues or on dealing with the DPRK. Kim lamented that, consequently, they did not have sufficient time to discuss China's growing economic and political influence in the region, a subject that would have to await the next round of strategic dialogue.

YACHI: ROK SHOULD BE PRUDENT IN APPROACH TO N-S ENGAGEMENT  
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15. (C) On North Korea, said Kim, Yachi conveyed Japan's concern that the ROK received little in return for its level of economic cooperation with Pyongyang. Absent visible and effective reforms in North Korea, the Kaesong Industrial

Complex (KIC) and other forms of economic engagement only served to prop up the Kim Jong-il regime. This, together with China's assistance to the DPRK, rendered any measure to apply pressure on Pyongyang ineffective. From Japan's point of view, the DPRK would approach the Six Party Talks more seriously if it no longer received assistance from the PRC and the ROK. Economic assistance was best reserved for discussion in the framework of the Six Party Talks.

N-S COOPERATION IMPORTANT FOR RESOLVING NUCLEAR ISSUE  
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16. (C) Yu responded that the ROK believed consistent progress in inter-Korea relations was a crucial factor in successfully resolving the DPRK nuclear issue. Improved Seoul-Pyongyang ties ultimately reduced military tension on both sides and would allow the DPRK to be more cooperative at the Six Party Talks. The importance of the Six Party Talks notwithstanding, easing tensions on the Korean Peninsula was a more pressing issue for Seoul. While visible and immediate reforms in the DPRK were desirable, the ROK believed continued engagement with the North would eventually steer the DPRK toward becoming a responsible state. The ROK also based its policy of providing economic assistance to North Korea partly out of humanitarian concerns, as alleviating food shortages was a practical step in improving the lives and welfare of the North Korean people. Moreover, South Korea did not believe pressure against North Korea would be effective in changing Pyongyang's behavior.

17. (C) According to Tanaka from the Japanese Embassy, Yu added that North Korean citizens were increasingly aware of the ROK's relative affluence over the DPRK, as well as South Korean food assistance. Over time, continued contact with visiting South Koreans and exposure to inter-Korean economic projects like the KIC would inevitably lead to changes in North Korean society. As such, visible reminders of South Korea's economic superiority, such as infrastructure projects and factories bearing South Korean identification, could act as a catalyst for the DPRK's eventual transformation. Noting

that the ROK accounted for 60 percent of all humanitarian assistance to North Korea and 20 percent of the DPRK's foreign trade, Yu asserted that Seoul had clearly linked any increase in economic cooperation to progress in the Six Party Talks. It was, however, noteworthy that China accounted for 40 percent of North Korea's foreign trade -- twice as much as the ROK.

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ROK NOT IGNORING DPRK HUMAN RIGHTS, HAS A UNIQUE ROLE  
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¶8. (C) Tanaka reported that VFM Yachi cautioned the ROK not to fall behind the international community in efforts to improve human rights conditions in the DPRK. Japan hoped that the ROK -- which, like Japan, had difficulties persuading the DPRK to resolve long-standing abductee issues -- would be more proactive on North Korea human rights. VFM Yu stated that Seoul fully understood Tokyo's position on the issue, stressing that the international community greatly misunderstood the ROK's position on North Korea human rights. The ROK did not view the human rights issue as a diplomatic issue, but as an internal matter. Seoul therefore supported the international community's diplomatic efforts to urge the DPRK to improve its human rights conditions, but viewed its own role as a provider of necessities to relieve the suffering of the people of North Korea. By providing food assistance and accepting North Korean refugees, the ROK played its own part in the greater effort to address the human rights situation without endangering progress in inter-Korean reconciliation.

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SIX PARTY TALKS  
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¶9. (C) MOFAT's Kim said both vice ministers agreed to cooperate closely to work toward resumption of the stalled Six Party Talks and implementation of the September 19 joint statement of principles. Yachi expressed Japan's desire to host a U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral coordination meeting in the near future. He welcomed the ROK's decision to accept five elements out of the U.S. eight-point proposal for South

Korea's participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and urged Seoul to consider participating in interdiction exercises in the region. Yu said ROK policymakers thought Japan's three-track approach to implementing the September 19 joint statement was a good idea. The ROK hoped the Six Party Talks would resume before Hu Jintao's visit to Washington in late April. It was unrealistic, however, to rely exclusively on China's efforts to restart the talks. The ROK therefore had urged the DPRK at every opportunity to return to the Six Party Talks.

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HISTORY ISSUES SHOULD BE RESOLVED BEFORE NEXT PM, SAYS YU  
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¶10. (C) Yachi regretted that President Roh Moo-hyun's speech commemorating the March 1 independence movement against Japanese occupation had criticized Japan's supposed desires for conquest and hegemony. It was unfortunate that Japan had not received a fair assessment of its efforts toward global peace 60 years since the end of World War II. Yachi also expressed concern that Beijing and Seoul appeared to be taking a united front on the history issues. Increasing politicization by China and the ROK on history issues was unhelpful. While Japan took in the sentiments of the Korean people "with heavy heart," it was important for Japan and Korea to develop a future-oriented relationship.

¶11. (C) Yu responded that Japan's political leadership needed to re-examine its understanding of history if it was committed to improving bilateral relations with the ROK. He added that continued visits to the Yasukuni shrine by PM Koizumi's successor could seriously hinder progress in bilateral relations, stressing that history issues ought to be resolved before Japan had a new Prime Minister.

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POSSIBLE MEETING BETWEEN FOREIGN MINISTERS IN QATAR

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¶12. (C) Yachi proposed, in the spirit of enhancing bilateral ties, to double the number of ROK-Japan joint cultural events from 1,800 to 3,600 in 2006. Both sides agreed to resume another round of the ROK-Japan security dialogue with foreign and defense ministry officials in mid-April. They also agreed to cooperate on providing assistance to Koreans forcibly relocated to the Sakhalin Islands at the turn of the century and launching the second phase of the joint history committee in April. In addition, both governments would try to arrange a foreign ministers meeting on the sidelines of the May Asia Cooperative Dialogue in Qatar.

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IRAQ/IRAN  
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¶13. (C) Tanaka, from the Japanese Embassy, said VFM Yachi explained that Tokyo was contemplating an early withdrawal of its troops from Iraq. Although Japan had not yet made a final decision, the timing of withdrawal by Australia and the U.K. was key. Yu, expressing surprise at Japan's idea for early withdrawal, said the ROK was considering recalling some troops from the more secure parts of Iraq. It planned to provide USD 220 million in assistance to the Iraqis.

¶14. (C) On Iran, both sides expressed concern at Tehran's increasingly problematic behavior with its nuclear program. Japan urged Iran through various channels to heed the international community's warnings and to follow established IAEA norms. Yu said Tehran had asked for the ROK's cooperation at the IAEA, even threatening to place a trade embargo on South Korean imports. Seoul would not, however, cave into Tehran's demands.

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EAS, FM BAN'S UN SECGEN CANDIDACY, UNSC LINKAGE  
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¶15. (C) According to MOFAT's Kim, Yachi briefed Yu on the recent normalization talks between Japan and North Korea. Yu gave a read-out of the recent inter-Korean general officer-level military talks and former President Kim Dae-jung's planned visit to North Korea. On the East Asia Summit, both sides agreed it remained unclear what purpose the body would serve and that it was important for the EAS to

develop its identity further. They also agreed new member states should be democracies and that encouraging participation by countries like India and Australia was particularly important. Yachi stated that Japan opposed participation by Russia and opined that the United States appeared disinterested in the EAS. Yu said the ROK was open to new participants, but saw no need for an early resumption of EAS. On Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon's candidacy as UN Secretary General, Yachi said Japan viewed Ban as a

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highly-qualified candidate and believed the next SecGen should be someone from an Asian country. Given Japan's interest in gaining a seat at the UN Security Council, he hoped Tokyo and Seoul would continue discussions.

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GOJ UNLIKELY TO OPPOSE BAN'S CANDIDACY, YU TELLS AMB  
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¶16. (C) In a separate March 15 meeting with the Ambassador, VFM Yu (acting for FM Ban) said he had a frank, open exchange with Yachi. Yachi informed Yu that in all likelihood PM Koizumi would make one more visit to Yasukuni shrine before he steps down in September. Yachi asked that the ROKG "not to react too emotionally." Yachi assessed that if former cabinet chief Fukuda or Finance Minister Tanegaki succeeded Koizumi, chances were good that there would not be prime ministerial visits to Yasukuni. However, if Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe or FM Aso were to become prime minister, such

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visits could occur. Yachi was trying his best to improve

relations with South Korea. He suggested a visit by FM Aso to Seoul, which Yu discouraged fearing that there would not be a meeting with President Roh and that this would be portrayed as a snub. Perhaps, Yu said, FM Ban could visit Tokyo. Yu also noted that his Japanese interlocutors, including senior LDP legislators, seemed very positive about FM Ban, but were non-committal on whether they would support Ban in the UNSYG race. Still, Yu assessed that Japan would not openly oppose Ban because such a move would be very damaging for relations.

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